

## **WARREN COUNTY BOARD OF SUPERVISORS**

**COMMITTEE: TOURISM**

**DATE: OCTOBER 24, 2006**

---

---

**COMMITTEE MEMBERS PRESENT:**

SUPERVISORS TESSIER  
BELDEN  
GABRIELS  
KENNY  
SHEEHAN  
STEC  
MERLINO

**OTHERS PRESENT:**

REPRESENTING THE TOURISM DEPARTMENT:  
KATE JOHNSON, TOURISM COORDINATOR  
JOANNE CONLEY, ASSISTANT TOURISM  
COORDINATOR  
REPRESENTING PAUL KAZA ASSOCIATES:  
PAUL KAZA  
BRIANNE TOWNE  
REPRESENTING THE FORT WILLIAM HENRY:  
SAM LUCIANO  
FRED AUSTIN  
WILLIAM THOMAS, CHAIRMAN  
JOAN SADY, CLERK  
SUPERVISORS:  
CAIMANO  
CHAMPAGNE  
GERAGHTY  
MASON  
JOANN MCKINSTRY, CONFIDENTIAL SECRETARY TO  
THE COMMISSIONER OF ADMINISTRATIVE AND  
FISCAL SERVICES  
SUZANNA BERND, GLENS FALLS CIVIC CENTER  
DAVE STRAINER, TOWN OF QUEENSBURY  
AMANDA ALLEN, LEGISLATIVE OFFICE SPECIALIST

---

---

Mr. Tessier called the meeting of the Tourism Committee to order at 10:16 a.m.

Motion was made by Mr. Belden, seconded by Mr. Merlino and carried unanimously to approve the minutes of the September 27<sup>th</sup> meeting subject to correction by the Clerk of the Board.

Privilege of the floor was extended to Kate Johnson, Tourism Coordinator, who distributed copies of her agenda to the Committee members, a copy of which is on file with the minutes. Ms. Johnson announced that Paul Kaza of Paul Kaza Associates, Inc. and his associate Brianne Towne were in attendance to give the annual overview of services presented to Warren County by their firm.

Mr. Kaza presented a power point presentation entitled "The Year in Review, October 2005 - 2006", a printed copy of which is on file with the minutes. The presentation detailed the weather changes and their affect on the marketing of the region. Mr. Kaza explained that after a fairly warm, wet start to the winter, snowfall and skiing conditions

---

improved dramatically in March leading to a high yield of winter imagery.

Mr. Kaza advised that during the Winter season 240 images were secured for unlimited use. He explained that a different photographer had been used for 2006 leading to a much higher volume of photos. Mr. Kaza noted that the cost of the 240 images secured was similar to the cost for eight images in the past. In addition, Mr. Kaza apprised, all of the photography was digital and could be either downloaded or emailed to any publication seeking visuals of Warren County and its attractions at no additional cost.

Moving to the Spring and Summer seasons of 2006, Mr. Kaza referenced the different conventions held in the Lake George region and the imagery received from them. He stated that during this season his firm was able to capture both video and photography for long term marketing use. Mr. Kaza apprised that the Meetings and Conventions video shown at the September meeting had been completed, duplicated and forwarded to Ms. Johnson and her staff for marketing use.

Mr. Kaza reminded the Committee that during the September meeting his associate, Rachel Carter, had given a detailed presentation with respect to the public relations services provided by their firm. He summarized that a fair amount of time and hard work had been spent by himself and his staff developing the ground work for the public relations efforts. The bulk of those efforts included the production of a very comprehensive press kit, Mr. Kaza noted. He added that once launched, the press kit had drastically increased the number of press trips attracted to the area, and he expected this trend to continue. Mr. Kaza displayed a few articles printed in prominent magazines and newspapers promoting the Lake George area.

Because the consumer trend of using the internet for travel planning continued to rise, Mr. Kaza advised that budget shifts had been made to increase the funds used for online marketing. He noted that the number of consumers relying solely on the internet for making travel arrangements had increased drastically over the past years and that trend was expected to continue. Mr. Kaza added that he and his staff were able to track the use of the online advertising, making it their favorite type of promotion.

In direct relation to online advertising, Mr. Kaza stated that there had been explosive growth for the [visitlakegeorge.com](http://visitlakegeorge.com) website. In his powerpoint presentation he reviewed charts detailing the growth of website visits from year to year. Mr. Kaza apprised that, as reported at the September meeting, the website had been altered to allow visitors to download a copy of the Warren County Travel Guide rather than waiting for one to be mailed to them. He presented a chart to the Committee supporting the website change and reflecting the results of a 12 day study used to determine the use of the website. The study showed that the new version, which allowed the user to download the Travel Guide, was preferable to the old method of requesting a Guide for mailing.

---

Mr. Kaza advised that a thorough conversion research had been conducted, the results of which reflected \$39 of expenditure for every \$1 spent on advertising; these figures were fairly standard within the industry, he added. Mr. Kaza noted that the number of consumers viewing Warren County advertising solely via the internet had risen significantly to represent 20% of the total.

In closing, Mr. Kaza presented a chart to the Committee which represented the cumulative inquiries received from October 2004 through September 2006. He stated that although he was not satisfied with the results received from their marketing efforts in the initial year, he felt there had been a drastic improvement in the second year and he was much happier with those results.

With respect to the chart comparing the use of the old style of the website to the new, Mr. Caimano questioned the drop-off in visits mid-way through the study. Mr. Kaza explained that the website experienced a fair amount of fluctuation in visitors on a daily basis. He added that the decrease could be attributed to the day of the week, the weather and the fact that the website was visited far more often closer to the weekends and holidays than during the beginning or middle of the week. Mr. Caimano noted that due to the ability to make reservations and travel plans via the internet it had become a more prevalent lifestyle trend to make these types of plans at the last moment. Mr. Kaza agreed with Mr. Caimano's statement and added that travel decisions were also affected by the availability of instant weather reports via the internet. He added that these weather reports were helpful when the conditions were good but devastating when they were not.

Mr. Kaza apprised that his firm had not acquired any fall footage due to budgetary constraints. He said that their work had turned to cataloging and organizing both the recent photography and the prior images captured for easy use by the Tourism Department.

Mr. Gabriels asked Mr. Kaza if the Cumulative Inquiries chart could be tracked further to see what time frame the consumers were intending to visit the area. Mr. Kaza replied that he did not have the ability to track the inquiries in that manner; however, he noted, the overwhelming trend in the tourism industry seemed to be that inquiries and arrangements were made for travel at the last moment. Due to this trend, Mr. Kaza estimated that the majority of the inquiries and visits occurred within a relatively short time frame. Ms. Johnson apprised that during past winter seasons her Department had received inquiries based on winter advertisements seeking information for the summer season.

Mr. Tessier thanked Mr. Kaza and Ms. Towne for their presentation and he announced that Sam Luciano, of The Fort William Henry, was in attendance to give an account of the Smith Travel Report.

---

Mr. Luciano thanked the Committee for the opportunity to address them and he distributed printed copies of his powerpoint presentation, a copy of which is on file with the minutes. In support of Mr. Kaza's statements regarding last minute bookings and plans made via the internet, Mr. Luciano stated that The Fort William Henry's internet bookings had skyrocketed in recent years and he noted that the average booking occurred within only seven to sixteen days prior to the consumer's stay, according to a recent study.

Mr. Luciano proceed with his powerpoint presentation which included several charts detailing occupancy levels in Warren County as compared to other Counties throughout the summer of 2006.

Mr. Luciano summarized that after decades of the supply (rooms) and demand (tourists) being relatively equal, both occupancy levels and the average daily rate of accommodations decreased in 2005 due to an increase in supply, caused by new room construction. He added that the new properties constructed in the area would not become destination points because they lacked the facilities needed to attract large groups for conferences or conventions. Mr. Luciano noted that there had been a significant reduction in the number of rooms booked during the Saratoga racing season due to the addition of available accommodations in Saratoga and points southward.

Mr. Luciano apprised that competing Counties used events held at local convention centers and performance halls to draw consumers to the area. He added that special events marketed to families were also used to increase occupancy during slow periods. Mr. Luciano recommended that Warren County use a similar marketing strategy to draw business to the area. He added that the Glens Falls Civic Center could be rehabilitated to become an entertainment center and that a trade show facility could also be built to add attraction to the area. In addition, Mr. Luciano suggested the employment of an Events Coordinator to draw events to the region. He noted that between himself and the other staff at The Fort William Henry, they had developed many ideas for events that could be brought to the area; Mr. Luciano added that they would be happy to share those ideas in an effort to bring business to Warren County.

Mr. Tessier thanked Mr. Luciano for his presentation and announced that the Committee would resume review of the agenda with the second item which related to the 2007 Travel Guide. Ms. Johnson noted that at the August meeting authorization was given to proceed with the printing of the 2007 Travel Guide by Wilcox Press. She advised that she had recently received a call from Wilcox Press relating that they were unable to finish the project because they could not buy the paper. After much discussion between the printer, the County Attorney and the Purchasing Department, it was decided that the job needed to be re-bid, Ms. Johnson stated. She said that they had already proceeded with the re-bidding process and intended to open the sealed bids on October 27<sup>th</sup>. Ms. Johnson requested permission to proceed to contract with the low bidder who met all specifications and the Committee approved the request.

---

Ms. Johnson apprised the Committee that the Tourism Department's marketing of Warren County would be taken to a whole new level in the form of a commercial to be aired on the CBS Superscreen located at Times Square in New York City. She expounded that the 30 second commercial advertising Warren County would air 18 times per day from November 16<sup>th</sup> - 30<sup>th</sup>. Ms. Johnson added that the commercials would air during the Thanksgiving Day Parade and a good portion of the busiest shopping season of the year. She added that the 30 second spot would be included on a one-hour loop advertising other companies such as Corona, Home Depot, Daimler Chrysler and Allstate Insurance. Ms. Johnson said that it was hard to estimate the response from the advertising but she hoped that the reflection of the website address and telephone number would resonate with the viewers, leading them to contact her Department. Included in the agenda, Ms. Johnson advised, was a press release developed by Joanne Conley, Assistant Tourism Coordinator, with respect to the New York City exposure that was to be released to the media immediately.

Ms. Johnson apprised that as the Tourism Department approached their transitional phase for 2007 they had begun the bidding process for website hosting, public relations services and broadcast media buying to which they had received several responses. She added that they had also advertised for the new Creative Director position, and several responses had been received for that position also. Ms. Johnson stated that interviews were to follow for all of the services and positions noted.

Included in the agenda, Ms. Johnson advised, were copies of the Winter Events Guide and the events place-mat developed by her Department. She noted that because of the delay in the printing of the 2007 Travel Guide, they were virtually out of them and it was very fortunate that the website had been altered to offer the guide in a downloadable format.

Ms. Conley apprised that in the agenda she had included a letter with reference to the re-design of the I Love NY website. She said that the letter asked for descriptive information from each city, town and village to be included on the I Love NY website. Ms. Conley noted that the description could be up to 250 words and could include hyperlink items to allow the user to link to the respective website of each city, town or village.

Continuing, Ms. Conley stated that the level of response received to the Occupancy Survey was very similar to that of the past year, regardless of the incentive offered. She asked all of the Committee members in attendance to keep this in mind when speaking with the lodging facilities or attractions in their communities and request that the surveys be returned.

Ms. Johnson advised that Pam Morin, Group Tour Convention Promoter, was unable to attend the meeting as she was in Quebec attending the Quebec Bus Owner's Association Convention. She said that, as per Ms. Morin's request, a copy of the 2007 Group Tour Planner was included in the agenda for the Committee's review. Also included was a copy of an article printed in the Student Group Tour Magazine, which gave great exposure of the Tourism Departments contact numbers, Ms. Johnson stated. She added

---

that a press release had been developed with respect to the 2007 Group Tour Planner and its availability for distribution to tour decision makers, and a copy of that document was attached also.

Mr. Tessier apprised that as a result of the TPCAC (Tourism Promotion Citizens Advisory Committee) meeting it was decided that they would no longer be an official Warren County Committee. He noted that it was important to the Tourism Committee to understand how individual businesses or industry are performing and for the group to report positive or negative trends. Mr. Tessier stated that the Committee was always interested in hearing from local tourism-related businesses and he encouraged those groups to present their issues to either their Town Supervisor or Chamber of Commerce to be relayed for Committee discussion. He added that the Committee welcomed written reports or, with advance notice, a request to be added to the agenda for presentation at a Committee meeting. Finally, Mr. Tessier stated that Ms. Conley would continue to act as liaison between Warren County and the business community.

Mr. Tessier apprised that the final item of the agenda pertained to the monthly meeting scheduled for the Committee. He noted that Joan Sady, Clerk of the Board, was attempting to re-align the meeting schedules to make them more accommodating for the Committee members and he asked for their input on the subject. It was the consensus of the Committee that the meetings should be scheduled for the second Tuesday following the monthly Board meeting, as they were currently.

As there was no further business to come before the Tourism Committee, on motion made by Mr. Kenny and seconded by Mr. Stec, Mr. Tessier adjourned the meeting at 11:15 a.m.

Respectfully Submitted,  
Amanda Allen, Legislative Office Specialist